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UNCLAS WELLINGTON 000428

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: INVITATION TO THE US-EU INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON IRAQ: NEW ZEALAND

REF: A. SECSTATE 94861

[1](#)B. STATE 93742

[1](#)1. On May 27, Ambassador Swindells presented reftel background information about the U.S.-EU Iraq conference to Simon Murdoch, Chief Executive at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Minister Goff is on official travel in North America.) The Ambassador made the presentation together with Dutch Ambassador Rasha ter Braack, who was acting in her capacity as EU Presidency representative. Both Ambassadors stressed that their joint presentation to GONZ -- and the conference itself -- was an historic moment, rising out of President Bush's February trip to Brussels. Ambassador Swindells said that two years ago, it would have been hard to imagine such a combined effort. Murdoch said that he understood the symbolism of two great allies, America and Europe, coming together in this way.

[1](#)2. Ambassador Swindells recalled how quickly New Zealand came to the fore when it was time to rebuild Afghanistan. He said that since the liberation of Iraq, the President has worked hard to bring allies to the cause. Iraq's reconstruction has to work, the Ambassador said. The President's first job was to sell our continued role in Iraq to the American public during the last election campaign, and the stakes were high. Americans came together in agreement on the issue, and we hoped now others will as well. There was no better way to convey this to New Zealand than this appeal by the U.S. and EU Ambassadors.

[1](#)3. Murdoch reiterated that the Ambassadors' joint presentation spoke for itself. He said that he would consult with both Foreign Minister Goff and Minister of Defense Burton, and would let them know this was a serious, urgent request to make Minister Goff available for the conference. Murdoch acknowledged the conference as a watershed moment from which the next steps in Iraq will emerge. He added that the conference date could pose a problem, as New Zealand is starting to gear up for general elections. (NB: Elections will be called some time between late July and mid-September.) Murdoch predicted that the Government would nevertheless want Minister Goff to attend if at all possible. He emphasized that his Ministry would recommend that Goff attend, or if that were not possible that a senior minister would go in his place.

[1](#)4. Murdoch cautioned that New Zealand might not be able to dedicate manpower to Iraq immediately, having decided NZ's ongoing reconstruction work in Afghanistan must be maintained. He also reminded the Ambassadors that New Zealand had provided 60 military engineers to Iraq reconstruction, and that they had doubled the length of their original tour to one year. But the timing of the U.S.-EU conference is very good, Murdoch said, as the Ministry has been doing a lot of in-house thinking regarding options for future GONZ engagement in Iraq, including reconstruction and peace maintenance. He predicted the Minister or other New Zealand rep would come to the conference well briefed about the issue. He promised to provide an answer to the invitation as soon as possible.

Swindells